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ABSTRACT

Employing an interdisciplinary approach, this outdoor education guide to the study of cemeteries is designed for older elementary and younger secondary students. Suggestions are provided for activities involving the study of history, geology, mathematics, art, language arts, and values. For example, the cemetery markers lend themselves to art activities involving the study of lettering styles, stone sculpture, and shape and design; likewise, the shapes of the various tombstones can inspire mathematical measurement activities. Specific projects for outdoor cemetery activities are outlined via worksheets. Among the worksheets provided are the following: making a map worksheet of the cemetery; a local history documentation worksheet (name of deceased, country, year of death, year of birth, age at death, etc.); a geology worksheet (examination of the materials used for markers and the date at which a given material was most popular); a math measurement worksheet, requiring diagrams explaining how a given marker was measured; a second math measurement worksheet focusing on the size of the total cemetery and the cost of plots; an art worksheet focusing on the designs found on tombstones and requiring sketches of such designs; a language arts worksheet focusing upon the language inscribed upon the tombstones and its present equivalent. Supplementary resources are suggested. (JC)

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NORFOLK COUNTY OUTDOOR EDUCATION



By far the most unusual inscription found on a nineteenth century Ontario gravestone can be seen at Rushes Cemetery outside Crosshill (see photo on p. 67). Nearly the entire face of this marker is carved with a cryptogram. Aside from the family name, Bean, two women's names, Henrietta and Susanna, and "Gone Home," the only readable line on the marker is the sentence at the bottom, "Readers meet us in heaven." The marker is of the usual soft white marble and, as a result, many of the letters are now extremely difficult to decipher.

S V W E T B S . A 15 S T M O R E .
 E I R T E 2 Y D & H N S 10 H E
 M A A D 17 & S H T N O A R M T
 N A Y D H D . N E F S . M Y E H E
 E N S . O W M . A B E O 2 D 26 T T
 E V & E I R O M I F S G E E E
 H R S 27 D I I E T . W R 7 . A O M
 D . A U H T A N M I S A 8 6 B . T
 H T S E S M E R E T E L I E S .
 Y E A I P H N I T A Y R I P M
 E W N 8 6 5 A G E D 23 A P E L
 E R N H S N W F W O I D T D H
 I G A I 2 D . I E H D E 27 H G O
 T F R M O A D R N W N E V N . A
 F S O G D N A E O I H A E M Y

Cryptogram taken from Early Ontario Gravestones
 by Carole Hanks.

Can you decipher the coded message?

1977

Cemetery Study

Purpose - At first a study of or in a cemetery may appear a little morbid, but consider the value to students who become aware of the local history, knowledgeable of the people who built their community and so more appreciative of their heritage.

Nearly every school has a community cemetery nearby. Here the students can become aware of the historical and religious values of their country, they can be introduced to some methods of research, and they can begin to examine attitudes of the adult world. They are naturally curious and intrigued by customs which they observe in the community such as funeral ceremonies.

Relating this unit to pioneer studies is probably the most usual route followed. Of course a study of this nature reinforces the interrelationship of many subject areas which haven't yet been successfully segregated in their young minds.

Encourage your class a few days before the trip to discuss their behaviour at the cemetery. This will establish the purpose for the trip and a few rules of conduct which show respect for this environment which to many is a place very sacred and dear.

Obtain permission from the cemetery board, or church officials. When asking permission indicate that the students will be properly instructed and adequately supervised. Also outline what the children will be doing during their visit.

<u>Topic List</u>	History
	Geology
	Mathematics
	Art
	Language
	Values
	Projects

Organizing the class into groups can produce excellent results as it teaches cooperation, report preparation and oral presentation. Let each group select a topic, then give them each a background sheet and an assignment sheet. They can then organize within their group to complete the assignment.

A second approach is to divide the cemetery into sections and have every group work on the same assignment which covers several topics. Select questions from the samples or add some of your own related to the specific local conditions and your own class's interest and background.

A useful supplement to this initial booklet would be a detailed report on the cemetery nearest you. Several of these are already on file at the Outdoor Education office. Since I would like to produce a map of the older cemeteries of Norfolk and a catalogue of maps and unique markers (design, material, epitaph, age) please send me a copy of your class' research.

A useful reference is Early Ontario Gravestones which illustrates interesting local headstone on pages 77, 80, 84, 86, 87, 89.

Local History -

Examine the monuments to determine who made them and where he worked. A set of mason's identification marks on the early stones (L, O, Y), were assigned after the mason had served his apprenticeship. Bradfields, Simcoe, mark was // and his father's mark was V. The mason was then entitled to use the mark to identify his work. Later tombstone makers and companies added their name and location. These marks are very insignificant, usually on the back or base of the monument, often at ground level or even below.

A bit of detective work can be conducted with the names on markers. Surnames will indicate the country of origin of the early settlers, Christian names will indicate popular usage whether biblical, or royal family. Dates may indicate times of immigration, and will indicate years of epidemics. The age at death will reveal a great deal about living conditions and life span of people of the different historical periods.

Look for old words or expressions seldom used today.

Follow-up could include library research on burial customs of the past, the present and ancient people such as Egyptians, North American Indians, Aztecs, Mayans.

Although many shy away from a study of interment methods perhaps a study should include the types of graves used - simple, above-ground vault, below ground vault, crypt, mausoleum and cremation vessels.

Since many historical figures were buried with much pageantry their funerals and interment are well documented. A research assignment could be given on Napoleon, Gandhi, Lenin, Kennedy, Churchill as well as a long list of kings and queens. There may even be records of funerals of famous Canadian statesmen.

Geology -

The monuments in our cemeteries are made from several materials. Most early wooden markers have not survived, but the soft white marble used in the 19th century is common place in all of our cemeteries. They can be recognized by the rough sugary-looking surface often covered with a black lichen. Sandstone, slate and other sedimentary rocks are very rare as tombstones.

The modern monuments are made of polished granite (grey and pink) and imported marble (black). A class set of chips collected from a monument works (Bradfield, Simcoe) would make an excellent reference for this study.

Between 1885 and 1890 a U.S. company went through Canada placing one sample monument in each cemetery.*

* One has been located at Waterford and one is rumored to be in the Knowles Cemetery, N. Walsingham. Please inform me if you discover any during your studies.

Mathematics -

There are many measuring activities to develop in the graveyards. Shapes such as cylinders, pyramids, cubes, spheres and rectangles can be introduced or reviewed. Use an individual stone to teach length, width, height, perimeter, area and volume. Observe and record the different styles and types of numbers in use. In some of the historical studies described the use of bar graphs is recommended to illustrate the study. Interviews with a funeral director and a monument maker could be arranged to determine the cost of burial and memorials.

Another cost related study possible is the land cost per unit area compared to the average or general land cost for other purposes within the region.

A research study may be conducted to determine the holding capacity of the present graveyard. This requires calculation of the total area, estimation of the area already occupied, the number of burials per year, and the area of each plot. The result is a projection of the ultimate date the area will be filled to capacity.

Art -

Shapes and Design - Most markers are rectangular or slab-shaped with modification related to the design on the upper portion. Certain periods seem to have stressed a semi-circular or gently curved upper surface.

There are usually a great variety of lettering styles to observe as well as decorations such as scrolls, Bibles, hands, flowers and trees.

Rubbings - The sculpturing on many stones is a unique form of art and a copy of this may be taken back to the classroom for further study. Although described here as a student activity, in several European countries it has been a favourite pastime for a long time. Books have been written on the subject, regions have prohibited the practice because of potential damage to the stone monuments, and professionals charge for their services and sell their product.

The method is simple. Hold or tape if necessary a soft white paper (newsprint) over the face of the marker and stroke the design area lightly with a large crayon or carpenter's crayon. Vary the intensity to produce different results. Take care and you will be pleased with the results. This process often makes the inscription and epitaph of a badly weathered surface legible. You may wish to experiment with different media and styles. (Montages, mixing colours, graphite or charcoal)

A spray lacquer fixative may be used to prevent smudging. The results will make a vivid display for your classroom or school halls.

Language Arts

In the 19th century cemeteries were meant to be visited and grave markers meant to be read. It still is a pleasant place to stroll and ponder the clues to a life style of the past.

One of the pleasant perhaps less project oriented activities is to read epitaphs.

These vary in style from poetry to prose, from single lined Biblical quotations to personal messages. They may be happy, hopeful, sad or humorous.

Examples:

"Sleep on sweet babe,
And take thy rest,
God cald the home,
For he thought it best.

(Picton, 1855)"¹

"O'er 50 yrs. we struggled here,
Together through this world of woe.
Each one the burden freely bore,
Through summer's heat, and winter's snow.
But now the struggle's past and gone,
We hope the debt of sin is paid.
And in the resurrection morn,
To awake in Christ our living head.

(Bowmanville, 1872)"²

"John Gray's epitaph upon himself is a satirical, even disillusioned, epigram...

My own epitaph:

Life is a jest, and all things show it.
I thought so once and now I know it.

—John Gray, 1685-1732"³

Children should be encouraged to express their own feelings about cemeteries, death and funerals. They should learn to use new words properly.

Some new words - plot, epitaph, hearse, coffin, mortician, crypt, mausoleum, funeral, cremation.

Look for old words or expressions seldom used today. Apparent misspellings, abbreviations and alterations by the craftsman are all interesting observations.

¹ Hanks, Carole, Early Ontario Gravestones, McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited Toronto, 1974, p. 21.

² Ibid., p. 25.

³ Untermeyer, Louis and Davidson, Carter Poetry: Its Appreciation and Enjoyment, N. Y., Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1934.

Values

Can you discuss the religious reasons for burials and monuments, the personal values of this part of our society?

Can you discuss the costs and the business aspects of funerals and burials?

Surely you must consider the status value of these material symbols.

Be prepared to discuss many related topics: ghosts, death, wills, cremation, use of the body for scientific research and the use of land for this purpose.

General Questions

Have you ever visited a cemetery before?

Would this cemetery make a good park?

Should children climb on tombstones?

Should children talk loudly in a cemetery?

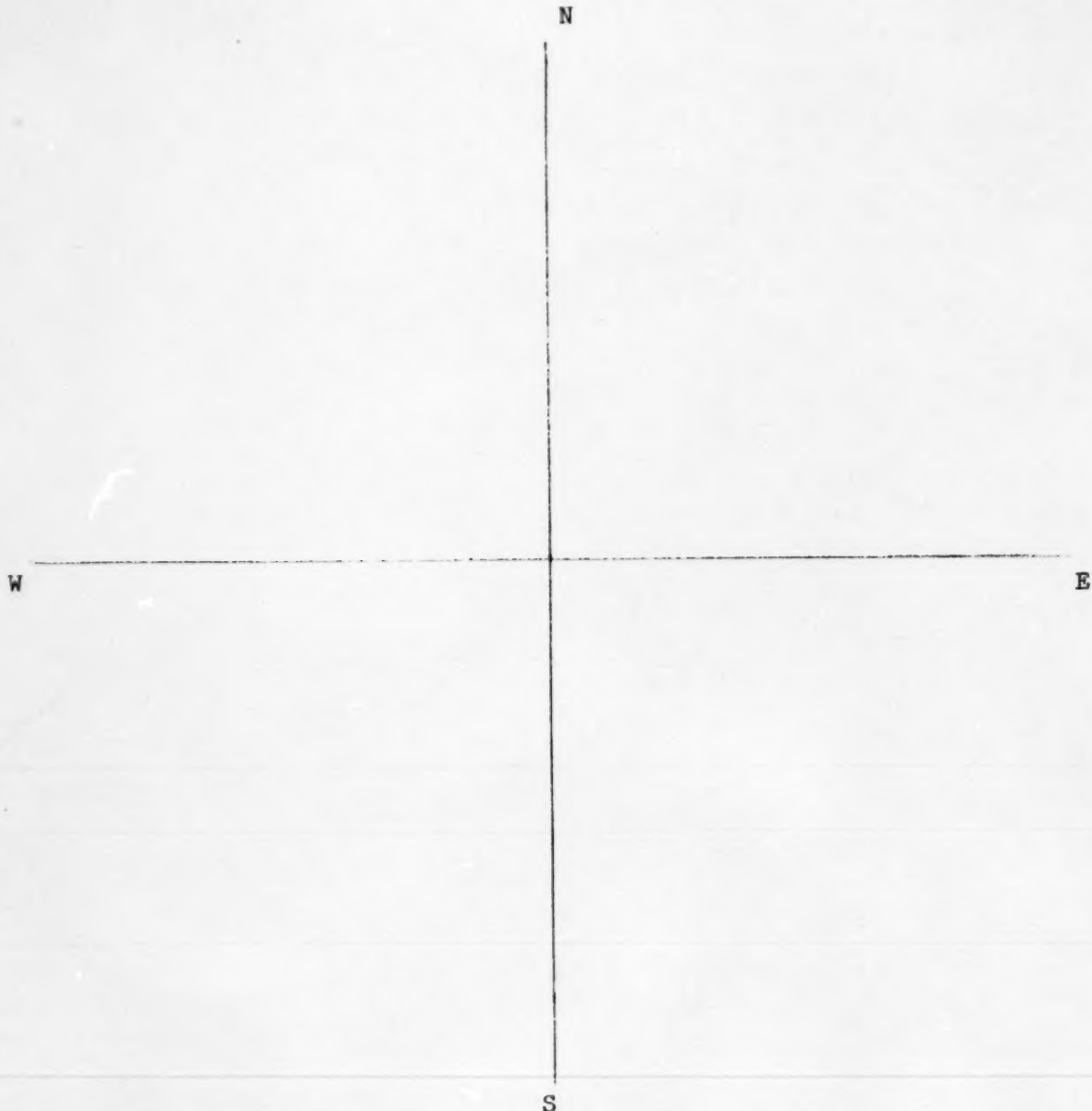
Who owns a cemetery?

Map of Cemetery

Name

Locate and Label

1. entrance
2. direction and distance of nearest village
3. special monument or memorial
4. your section
5. the oldest tombstone in your section



History

These projects are designed for group work in sections. Divide the cemetery into several sections so the whole class covers the entire area. If the cemetery is very large a transect or other sampling of the section could be done.

First Name	Last Name	Country if Known	Year of Death	Year of Birth	Age

Follow up compilation and tabulation is required.

Bar graphs can be used to illustrate.

Suggested Topics - Time to country, Name to time period, average life span for certain time periods (it may be necessary to separate men, women and children for meaningful results.)

Geology Worksheet

- 1) Find 5 different materials used for markers.

- 2) In your section of the cemetery complete a chart.

Number	Date	Material

Combine all the groups' results and determine when each type of material was most common.

e.g. 1920-1970 (granite) 1870-1880 (marble)

- 3) The inscription on some markers cannot be read. State 2 reasons for this.

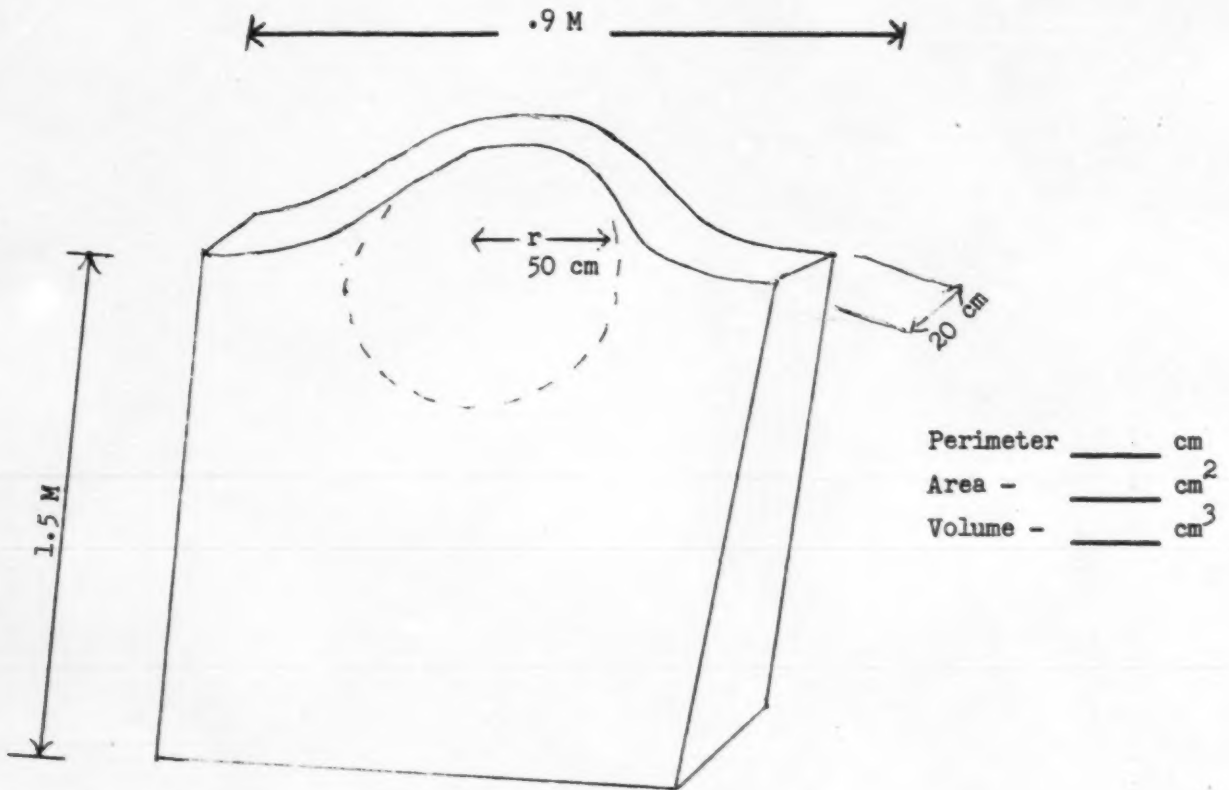
- 4) Are the monuments erected the same time as the date on the stone?

- 5) Which rock costs the most today?

Math Worksheet #1

- 1) How did people used to keep track of their life span?
- 2) At what time did the system change to what we use?
- 3) Select one headstone with an interesting shape.
List all the things which might be measured.

Use 5 measurements from your list. Measure carefully and record your measurements on a diagram.



Math Worksheet #2

Density

- 1) Measure the total area of the cemetery
(length x width) _____ square metres
- 2) Measure the area containing graves _____ square metres
- 3) Subtract to find area still available _____ square metres
- 4) Determine the area of one grave _____ square metres
- 5) Divide into the area still availalbe (3)
This is the number of plots available _____
- 6) Find out the number of burials per year _____
- 7) Divide this number into the number of
plots available(5) _____
- 8) This is the number of years left _____
- 9) This year _____ 19 _____
Add number of years left _____
- 10) This is the year when the graveyard
will be filled to capitivity _____
- 11) Why could it be filled before that date (10) _____

Cost

- 1) How much does a plot cost _____ \$ _____
 - 2) Area of one plot _____ square metres
 - 3) Cost per square metre _____ \$ _____
 - 4) Area of the graveyard _____ square metres
 - 5) Dollar value of the graveyard
(square metres x cost per square metre) _____ \$ _____
- Compare to the cost of a building lot
in your location

Art Worksheet

- 1) What animals are shown in the designs?

(sketches)

- 2) What types of plants can be found in the designs?

(sketches)

- 3) What other things have been carved on the stones?

- 4) What is a stone carving called?

- 5) Why were these objects carved in stone?

- 6) Sketch some symbols found on the headstones which are not animals, plants or objects.

(sketches)

Language Arts

- 1) Record an unusual word from the inscriptions.

What word is used instead today?

- 2) Illustrate 2 or 3 kinds of lettering used.

- 3)

Surname	Christian Name

- 4) Record one epitaph.

Local Information Sources

Archives:

Brantford Expositor about August 19, 1933.

Simcoe Reformer about August 19, 1933.

Eva Brook Donly Museum (numerous local projects).

Your local and school library.